

## PARISH PARTNERSHIP REPORT AND NEWS

### **St. Mary, Trenton and St. George, New Baden representatives hold two meetings and make important decisions -**

On Saturday, February 4, 2017 members of the Parish Partnership and Planning Committee and representatives from the pastoral council of St. Mary meet with Bishop Braxton for what was called a "Next Step" meeting, at which the Bishop reviewed with the parish representatives our progress in implementing our Pastoral Plan for Renewal and Restructuring. He gave his observations and made requests for further actions by our partnership parishes to move our collaboration forward.

### **Background information from the Bishop:**

Bishop Braxton specifically wanted our parishes to be aware of the need for pastoral planning between parishes in the diocese and that we must be aware the day is imminent when the number of priests available to serve parishes is severely diminished. Currently there are 114 parishes in the diocese with about 49 priests of the diocese and 30 "missionary priests" from other countries available to serve lead them. The majority of those 49 Belleville Diocese priests are over 50 years old and many near retirement. There is no guarantee that the "missionary priests" will be permitted by their Bishop's to remain in the future. "The future is now" would be a way to summarize the Bishop's observations, "and we must act NOW to better utilize our resources to advance the mission of the Church in Southern Illinois."

### **Bishop's observations:**

The Bishop made some observations about our partner parish plan - college age/young adults need to be on our planning team/councils; we must focus more on training of lay members to take on leadership duties; complete a job description for a joint lay pastoral associate. Most pointedly, Bishop Braxton said "Instead of expending energy and resources toward maintaining two parishes' individuality, spend more energy and focus on how to work together. In particular focus moving toward a common mission, joint offices, committees and councils."

### **Priority Action Items to be Undertaken as Directed by Bishop Braxton:**

The parishes should begin using a joint bulletin, if not weekly, on a periodic basis so as to become more familiar with each other's business and pastoral life.

More frequent joint pastoral council meetings are to be held between St. Mary and St. George to discuss our common mission and to formulate ways to jointly further that mission.

Adopt ASAP (as soon as possible) the Mass schedule for weekends outlined in our pastoral plan for parish partnership for when only one priest is available to be pastor and celebrate the liturgy in each parish. Do not wait for the day when on pastor retires, is transferred or incapacitated. Set a date and explain well what will happen and why.

### **Parish Councils make plans to respond to the Bishop's Requested Action Items**

A joint meeting of the pastoral councils was held on February 15, 2017. The following decisions were agreed upon for action.

**Bulletin:** The parish bulletins will be combined into one publication. Information will be gathered from the company that prints both parishes' bulletins. Meetings will be arranged with the appropriate staff and representative of the bulletin company to enable the two parishes having one joint bulletin. The effective date of this change is to be determined, but sometime this year if possible.

**Pastoral Councils:** The two bodies will begin meeting quarterly in May, 2017. Agendas and the business of the meeting will be coordinated by the presidents of each council.

**Mass Schedule:** The councils decided to "phase in" the new schedule for Masses at the two parishes, instead of changing everything at once. BEGINNING JUNE 3, 2017 THE SATURDAY EVENING VIGIL MASS SCHEDULE WILL BE AS FOLLOWS

**4:00 PM AT ST. GEORGE FOR 6 MONTHS (June through November) WITH NO MASS AT ST. MARY ON SATURDAYS.**

**November through May there will be a 4:00 pm Saturday Mass at St. Mary with no Mass at St. George.**

There was further discussion about the change for the Sunday Mass schedule as proposed by the original partner parish planning but no agreement could be reached at this time. But there will be a change at a future date and this will likely be solidified at another meeting in May. AS OF NOW THERE IS NO CHANGE TO THE SUNDAY MORNING MASS TIMES.

See the back of this insert for an explanation of why the times for Mass in both parishes must change.